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SUBJECT: UNAMI HUMANITARIAN SITUATION UPDATE IN IRAQ

[11](#). SUMMARY: United Nations Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) reps warned of a looming humanitarian crisis this summer in southern Iraq in a June 24 humanitarian situation update. These warnings tempered the announcement of the United Nations Development Group's (UNDG) approval of 17 infrastructure and humanitarian projects worth 232 million USD. In preparation for the June 30 transfer of sovereignty to the Iraq Interim Government (IIG), UNAMI and humanitarian partners are engaging in contingency planning to assess the abilities of various UN agencies and NGOs to respond to sudden humanitarian emergencies. End Summary.

DETERIORATING SITUATION IN BASRA

[12](#). UNAMI rep Wojtek Wilk warned of a deteriorating humanitarian situation in Basra this summer. Shortages of electricity, water, and fuel would be the principal causes of the perceived looming crisis, he said. UNAMI expects that the availability of electricity will decrease further this summer due to the increased usage of air conditioners and refrigerators. This would further strain the electricity system in the south. Furthermore, UNAMI predicts a severe water shortage in southern Iraq. According to UNAMI, the shortage is expected to worsen throughout the summer due to a reduction in the potable water supply and lack of back-up generators to operate purification and pumping plants. Wilk cited as additional problems the low output of the sweetwater canal in southern Iraq and increasing salinity levels in the Shatt al-Arab. UNAMI fears that as the water situation in the south worsens, Iraqis will turn to contaminated underground water. Overall, according to UNAMI, the water and electricity shortages during the summer would affect 4.5 million residents in the southern governates, with Basra suffering the worst. UNAMI estimates that Basra's water output will not reach pre-war levels until, at least, the end of 2004.

UNDG INFRASTRUCTURE AND HUMANITARIAN PROJECTS

[13](#). UNAMI's perceptions of a looming humanitarian crisis tempered UNDG rep Tetsuo Kondo's announcement during the meeting of UNDG's approval of 17 infrastructure and humanitarian assistance projects in Iraq, totalling 232 million USD. The bulk of the projects are devoted to infrastructure and housing, agriculture, water resources and the environment. Four projects focus on education and culture. All 17 projects have been cleared with the Iraq Ministry of Planning (MOP) in Iraq with the understanding that U.N. international staff would not be on the ground. Kondo also stressed the need to maximize the use of Iraqi expertise in implementing the projects and to develop better mechanisms to coordinate efforts with the MOP.

POST JUNE 30 CONTINGENCY PLANNING

[14](#). According to Wilk, the UN, led by UNAMI, and humanitarian partners are engaged in contingency planning exercises to prepare for the June 30 transfer of sovereignty to the IIG. The exercises are aimed at assessing the ability of various UN agencies to respond to sudden humanitarian emergencies, with a particular focus on the transport of potable water, food provided by the Public Distribution System (PDS), and medical supplies.

[15](#). Baghdad minimize considered.

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